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ABSTRACT

This guide is targeted to teachers of intermediate or advanced English as a Second Language (ESL). It provides three 1-hour lesson plans on the topic of the importance of participation in the 2000 U.S. census. The paper asserts that it is critical for minorities who have historically been undercounted and under-represented in the U.S. Congress to participate and be counted, that this is especially important in light of court challenges to the 'majority-minority' congressional district in North Carolina. Furthermore, it is especially important to count the 300,000 residents of Latino origin who have settled in North Carolina since the last census. The goal is to help ESL teachers provide their students with information and the chance to reflect critically so that they can understand if their interests are represented by their elected congressional representative, to understand how this controversial issue of redistricting affects them directly. The first lesson explains the census and asks who should be counted and why it is important. The second lesson provides concrete examples of what happens when people are counted and undercounted. Finally, the third lesson asks students to formulate their positions on the issues discussed in the previous two lessons and to act accordingly. (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education) (KFT)

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ED 440 553

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As the Executive Director of Literacy South, I decided to focus on the issue of representation and redistricting because it is of critical importance to minorities who have been historically undercounted and thus under-represented in the past. In researching the issues for this unit I discovered that race has always been a factor in the census. In the beginning of the census, slaves only counted as 3/5 a person and Native Americans, women and children didn't count at all. The issue of redistricting is also especially important for North Carolina because it has had its majority-black district, District 12, challenged by white conservatives and the Supreme Court. Many are anxious to see what will happen in 2002 when new districts are drawn again. Will the estimated increase of 300,000 Latinos in North Carolina be counted? If they are, who will represent their views and concerns? Representation and redistricting are the cornerstones of a government for the people by the people. Without equitable access to the political process, why should people vote or even care what happens?

Representation & Redistricting

Target audience: Advanced ABE or Intermediate/Advanced ESOL
Suggested time for unit: Three days or three one hour lessons

Unit Goal: To provide students with information and the chance to reflect critically so that they can understand the way their interests are represented or not by their elected congressional representatives; to understand how this controversial issue of redistricting connects to real participatory democracy.

Unit EFF Standards:
- Read with understanding
- Convey ideas orally and in writing
- Speak so others can understand
- Listen actively
- Cooperate with others
- Observe critically
- Advocate and influence
- Guide others
- Take responsibility for learning
- Reflect and evaluate

Unit Objectives:
1. Check knowledge about key words and ideas related to representation and redistricting;
2. Discuss and analyze the key issues related to representation and redistricting;
3. Discuss the history of counting the population and the relationship of the census count to deciding how many congressional representatives a state gets;
4. Discuss and understand how race has always been an issue in the census;
5. Make an informed choice about filling out the census because they understand the connection of redistricting to race and ethnicity;
6. Think critically about the issues related to redistricting, representation and race or ethnicity.

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Lesson 1: Who Counts?

Suggested time for lesson: 1.5 hours

Lesson 1 Objectives: 1, 2, 3

Materials needed: two versions of the reading Who Counts?

Lesson 1 EFF Standards:
- Speak so others can understand
- Listen actively
- Read with understanding
- Convey ideas orally and in writing
- Work collaboratively

Background redistricting information for facilitator:

This background reading is meant for teachers to become familiar with the issues. It is adapted from the article "Redistricting at the Millennium" by Laughlin McDonald. It outlines the history and key issues behind the controversy surrounding redistricting. This is an especially contested issue in North Carolina because District 12 which elected Mel Watt, one of North Carolina's few black congressional representatives, has been challenged. The Census 2000 minority count in the Piedmont will reopen the issue once again of redistricting along racial and ethnic lines.

Redistricting

As we await the 2000 census that will trigger another round of redistricting at the congressional, state, and local levels, the US Supreme Court has laid down a minefield of problems. In a series of 5-4 decisions, beginning with Shaw v. Reno in 1993 (which has caused the destruction of majority black and Hispanic congressional districts in Georgia, North Carolina, Texas, Florida, Virginia, Louisiana, and New York) the Court has made redistricting not only racially unfair, but nearly unmanageable. The court's new standards are "unworkable" and make redistricting difficult work for state legislature and place "at a disadvantage the very group, African-Americans, whom the Civil War Amendments sought to help."

One principle which does emerge with disquieting clarity from the recent redistricting decisions is that majority-black and Hispanic districts are held to a more stringent standard than majority-white districts. The Court struck down the majority-minority congress districts in the majority of cases on the grounds that the districts were bizarrely shaped and the states had subordinated their traditional redistricting principles to race. The Court had never called into question the constitution of a majority-white district on account of its bizarre shape, or because the jurisdiction subordinated its traditional redistricting principles to race. There is, of course, a long and continuing tradition of drawing majority white districts including those that are highly irregular in shape and disregarding traditional districting principles to protect white incumbents.

Before the millennium census precipitates another round of redistricting, the Supreme Court should reconsider its unfortunate and misguided Shaw cases. They have created subjective and unworkable standards of legislation and they no longer know the extent to which race can or should be taken into account in drawing district lines. The result of this has been to draw the federal courts increasingly and unnecessarily into the redistricting process. The Court has created rules that give political preference to whites and shackle racial minorities with special disadvantages in redistricting.

States may legislate with regard to race for redistricting for a variety of reasons—to overcome the affects of prior and continuous

continued...

discrimination, to comply with the 14th amendment and Voting Rights Act*, or simply to recognize communities that have a part racial or ethnic makeup to account for their common, shared interests.

** The Voting Rights Act of 1965 requires legislators to, wherever possible, draw districts that grant African Americans and Hispanics a majority of the population within the district, thereby increasing the opportunity for those groups to elect representatives of their own racial background or ethnicity.*

Activity:
Brainstorm with the students on the following questions and put their responses in three columns: Who is counted in the census? What other information is asked? What is this information used for? Ask students to look at the title, "Who Counts?" and make guesses about what the article might be about. Remember 'who' can refer to both what group of people get counted and who does the counting. Tell the students that there are two versions of the same reading and that you are going to give them the easier reading first (Version A.). Ask them to work in small groups.

Pass out Version A. Put the students into groups of 3-4 and ask them to read together and discuss what they understand. Tell them to choose one group member to summarize what they as a group understand to be the main points of the reading. Ask each group to report or write summary statements. The teacher just listens and only answers clarifying questions.

Pass out Version B. Ask students to read and check again their comprehension. Discuss with the students the differences between the two texts. Discuss why one text is easier to understand than the other. Discuss vocabulary.

Pass out the following questions to the small groups. Ask them to answer at least three of them.

a. Why were slaves counted only as 3/5 a person and Native Americans weren't counted at all? What do you think or feel about this?
b. Why do you think people of color were so undercounted in 1990? What do you think or feel about this?
c. Why were Hispanics the largest undercounted group? What do you think or feel about this?
d. Why does it matter that minorities were so undercounted? How does it matter to you?
e. What do you think would make minorities want to be counted? Do you want to be counted? If yes, why? If no, why not?

Variations: The reading can also be designed as a puzzle activity where each group is given just one paragraph and students have to put the paragraphs in order. You can also ask students to underline words or phrases they don't understand in version A or B.

Version A.

Who Counts?*

Every ten years the federal government counts the number of people living in the United States. This process is called a census. The first census was in 1790. Now the census asks questions about the people like: how old they are; what race they are; where they live; how much education they have; what kind of work they do and how much money they make; and how many people live in their home.

The US Constitution, Article #1, requires that the federal government count the population every 10 years. The reason is to allow states to have representation in Congress. The number of representatives is based on the number of people in the state.

The Constitution requires that the census count everyone, no matter if they are citizens, if they vote, how old they are, or if they are men or women. In the beginning of the census, slaves only counted as 3/5 a person. American Indians did not count at all. This started the idea of measuring racial and ethnic differences. The 1860 census counted 31.4 million people. This included 4 million slaves. This was the last census to which the 3/5 rule applied.

When the census undercounts the population, we have serious problems. The census is the only source of information used for deciding how many congress representatives a state will have. It is also used by the federal government to decide how much money to give states.

The 1990 census counted 248.7 million people. However, people of color or minorities were extremely undercounted. They were undercounted more than whites. Hispanics were undercounted by 5%; Blacks by 4.4%; Native Americans by 4.5; and Asian/Pacific Islanders by 2.3%.

Version B.

Who Counts?*

Every decade since 1790, the federal government has launched a major population count, documenting national growth. Over the years, the census has expanded to provide a detailed description of socio-economic characteristics of its people: their age and racial makeup, place of residence, educational attainment, work and wages, and household composition.

Article 1 of the US Constitution required that the federal government count the population at least every ten years to provide fair representation in the US House of Representatives from each state. The size of the delegation is apportioned based on the de-ennial population count.

The Constitution stipulates that the census count all inhabitants, regardless of citizenship, voting status, age, race, or gender. For the purpose of apportionment, Article 1 stipulated slaves be counted as 3/5 of a person and American Indians living in native settlements not be counted all thereby setting a precedent for measuring racial and ethnic differences within the overall population. The 1860 census counted 31.4 million people (including four million slaves) and was the last census to which the 3/5 rule was applied.

Census undercounts have serious social, political, and economic implications for our nation because the census is the single source for apportionment of congressional seats and is used extensively to distribute funds.

The 1990 census counted 248.7 million people. However, the difference between undercounts of whites and people of color (the "differential count") in 1990 was the greatest ever. Hispanics were undercounted by 5%, Blacks by 4.4%, Native Americans by 4.5% and Asians/Pacific Islanders by 2.3%.

Lesson 2: The Matching Game

Lesson 2 EFF Standards:
- Speak so others can understand
- Listen actively
- Read with understanding
- Convey ideas orally
- Work collaboratively
- Observe critically

Suggested time for lesson: 1 hour

Lesson 2 Objectives: 1,4,5

Materials needed: notecards with either a question or an answer.

Activity:

1. Count how many students you have and distribute the exact amount of question and answer cards.
2. Give each student either a question or an answer.
3. Ask the students to memorize what is on their card. Students with lower skill can read their card.
4. Ask the students to get up and walk around the room repeating what is on their card until they find someone whose information matches theirs. Students can not show their card. They can either memorize it or read it.
5. Once they find their partner, they should stand next to the person until all the matches are found.
6. Each pair should read or recite their question and answer for the group. If the group decides there is a match, move to the next pair. If a pair is an incorrect match, ask the group to figure out the error or which answer is best.

Critical thinking questions: At the end of the activity, ask the group some or all of the following questions:
1. For which set of questions and answers did you now all the answers?
2. Which ones were new information?
3. Which ones were most surprising?
4. Why do you think Kansas and Kentucky might have lost a representative?
5. Why did Florida gain 4 representatives?
6. Why might North Carolina gain a representative?

Variations

If you are working one-on-one or tutoring a student, you can turn the cards over and make it into a concentration game by asking the student to find the matches. The follow-up questions however should not be skipped because this is where the student gets to reflect on what he/she is learning and to begin to think critically about what the information means.

Matching Game Pairs

1.

Q. Why is it important to count the number of people in each state?
A. The number of people in each state must be counted to determine how many representatives a state can send to Congress.

2.

Q. How many people are sent by the state to the Senate?
A. Two.

3.

Q. What does 'reappoint' mean?
A. It means how many people a state can elect to the US House of Representatives based on the population of that state.

4.

Q. Which state gained four representatives after the 1990 census?
A. Florida.

5.

Q. Which states lost representatives?
A. Kansas and Kentucky.

6.

Q. Which state might gain a representative in 2000?
A. North Carolina.

7.

Q. Which districts in North Carolina elected two black members of congress?
A. The 12th districted elected Mel Watt and the 1st district elected Eva Clayton.

8.

Q. Is the Supreme Court usually in favor of drawing district lines based on race?
A. No, the justices usually vote not to draw districts based on race or ethnicity.

9.

Q. Who draws the districts after the census?
A. The state legislature.

10.

Q. Is it mandatory that each district be roughly equal in size (population)?
A. Yes, they can't be bizarre-looking and they must be compact, not separated by other districts or be in different areas of the state.

Lesson 3: Take A Stand

Lesson 3 EFF Standards:
- Speak so others can understand
- Listen actively
- Advocate and influence
- Convey ideas orally
- Observe critically

Suggested time for lesson: 1 hour

Lesson 1 Objectives: 6

Materials needed: three signs--Agree, Disagree, Not Sure; Questions for Take A Stand activity.

Activity:
Let the students know you will be reading a number of statements. In response to each one, you would like them to choose a sign to stand under. Once everyone has moved, you will be asking for one to two people under each sign to articulate the reason for his or her position. Emphasize that if anyone is persuaded by what they hear, they can change their position.

Agree/Disagree/Not Sure Statements

1. Drawing districts primarily to maintain or enhance minority voting power discriminates against white voters.

2. If a district has a degree of racial hostility then they (the minority group) may never have the opportunity to elect someone that they feel best represents their interest

3. Majority-black districts have been the reason a significant number of African-Americans have been elected to Congress.

4. Race should not be the predominant factor in drawing districts.

5. Undocumented immigrants should not fill out the census.

6. In the 2000 Census, individuals will be able to mark several categories for their race/identity. This will make redistricting harder.

7. Majority-black and Hispanic districts are held to a more stringent standard than majority-white districts.